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ABSTRACT

Both the Carnegie Report and the Paideia Report argue that all students should study the same curriculum and that significant qualitative change in educational programs is needed. Ernest Boyer's book, "High School," provides evidence of the diversity of the public schools, challenges stereotypes, and suggests that many needed changes can be implemented immediately with little cost. The Carnegie Report outlines several goals that will give purpose to schools and ensure that students leave high school with the tools needed to be effective citizens. The Carnegie Report argues that the high school should help all students develop the capacity to think critically and to communicate effectively through a mastery of language. Assisted, preferably, by teachers using Mortimer Adler's coaching method, students should be given time to work and rework drafts to comprehend the process of crafting a paper. The Boyer report also is concerned that students understand relationships between themselves, their country, and the world. To achieve the stated aims, teachers' work environments must be improved, expectations concerning teacher performance must be kept high, and teachers' accomplishments must be recognized. Realizing goals such as these entails sustaining the public's and the schools' interest in educational improvement. (RH)

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Adele Simmons

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SPEECH TO THE NATIONAL FORUM ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION DELIVERED ON DECEMBER 8 IN INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA.

Thank you, Dr. Gardner. Let me begin by expressing Ernie Boyer's regrets. As many of you know, he is currently hosting a Carnegie Foundation Conference on graduate education so that our graduate schools will be ready for the articulate, clear thinking, curious, multilingual students that we will be sending them once we have accomplished all we have discussed here.

Today, we are reviewing the recommendations and impact of several of the many reports on education that have appeared in the last year. These reports have much in common but they also have their differences. Some are differences in emphasis, some are more substantive. What the reports have in common is their concern for standards and for teaching and for teachers.

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While I will focus my remarks on the well written and thorough book by Ernie Boyer, called High School, I have been asked to mention the work of Mortimer Adler and the Paideia Group. Both the Carnegie Report and the Paideia Report share a conviction that all students in school should study the same curriculum. Both argue that a significant and qualitative

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change is required for schools to meet the expectations that some of us have for them and that all of us ought to have for them. These reports don't talk about equipment and facilities. They talk about relationships among human beings: students, teachers, principals and parents.

Each report is a result of a several year effort and is a reflection of the process that brought it into being. Mortimer Adler gathered a small group of colleagues to discuss an ideal educational program. He wanted to write a short uncompromising idealistic statement about what schools ought to be. Whenever any of us suggested complicated additions to the program, Adler firmly put us in our place saying, "Think how the world would be different if the Communist Manifesto had been four hundred pages long." Most of us associated with the report hoped that we might provoke controversy and dialogue--debate within schools about the curriculum, about the relationships between content and teaching, and about the preparation of teachers and school leadership.

The initial response to the report exceeded our modest goals. Some districts are establishing Paideia schools, others are holding conferences on the report. In my view, the Paideia Proposal pushed the parameters of the year's debate, giving legitimacy to many ideas that might have been rejected by the authors of the more practical reports that were to follow.

The process involved in the production of Boyer's High School was different. Ernie Boyer assembled a distinguished panel of practitioners and academics--teachers, principals, superintendents, state commissioners, psychologists, university

presidents, deans of schools of education, and representatives of the unions including Mary Futrell, now president of the NEA. He wanted to present a clear and fair picture of what actually was happening in our schools and to base his recommendations on direct experience in the schools. In order to do this, Boyer assembled a team of twenty five educators to spend four weeks in each of fifteen carefully selected schools. Their observations ensured that the report would be informed by what really is happening in schools and not what we think is happening. The field reports, which will be published separately, give ample evidence of the diversity of the schools in this country; they challenge stereotypes of both suburban schools and inner-city schools and suggest that while some needed changes may be costly and/or difficult to achieve for political reasons, many can be implemented immediately with little cost.

Houston's Mrs. Uresti, for example, is clear about what teachers should--and should not--do. "There is much paperwork connected with teaching," she said. "I don't ask the teachers to do it. I do it myself, or I have my office staff take care of the paperwork. The teachers' time must be spent on teaching; we permit as few interruptions as possible." It should not be difficult or costly to exercise discipline and eliminate interruptions in the school day such as announcements on the public address system, excuses from class for non-academic reasons, or bureaucratic paperwork.

The Carnegie Report is about standards. The time has come to move away from simply measuring curricula by Carnegie units or by

adding new courses to existing educational programs. The standards we talk about are more elusive and perhaps less easy to quantify, but there is little doubt that each of us knows a good school when we see one and a well-educated high school graduate when we meet one. The Carnegie Report outlines several goals directed at giving purpose to schools and to ensuring that students leave high school with the tools needed to be effective citizens. As Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, writes in his book High School, "The vision of parents, teachers, administrators, and students must be larger than a single class in a single day. It must go beyond keeping students in school and out of trouble, and must be more significant than adding up the Carnegie units that the students has completed."

It is a startling conclusion--that in many cases we simply do not expect enough of our students. The best schools establish a clear sense of purpose and high expectations for their students and teachers. The Carnegie Report presents telling examples of teachers and principals who have encouraged students to reach levels of accomplishment that surprise everyone.

Those of us on the Carnegie panel had the privilege of visiting the Atlanta public schools and seeing firsthand the positive impact that a committed superintendent, with backing from the school board and the community, can make. One of the strongest statements about expectations in Ernest Boyer's book came from the principal of a Houston high school where 85 percent of the students qualified for free or discounted lunches. Despite

the high percentage of students experiencing serious economic hardships, the school has an outstanding record of achievement and success. Herminia Uresti, the principal, had no magic formula for her successful program. She simply said, "We expect that every child can perform, and they do."

Teachers are the "heart of the matter," and our expectations of them affect their expectations of students. There are many small (and inexpensive) ways for us to begin to give teachers the support they need to do their jobs and the recognition that they deserve.

In addition to expectations, schools need a sense of purpose. Once a school has agreed upon its goals, it becomes easier to see what should and should not be the work of that school. In short, the clutter begins to fall out of the curriculum.

Many reports talk about a core curriculum. The Carnegie Report proposes that nearly two-thirds of a student's time be spent studying core subjects. The Carnegie curriculum has emphasized some areas that are not as clearly developed in other reports and gives definitions to them that will challenge both students and teachers. The Carnegie Report argues that the high school should help all students develop the capacity to think critically and to communicate effectively through a mastrey of language. As students become proficient in self-expression, the quality of their thinking will also improve. Too often we have devoted considerable resources to remedial reading and writing but we have not focused on helping C, or B, or even A students write better. Boyer argues that all students need to become

better communicators. As he says, "Clear writing leads to clear thinking; clear thinking is the basis of clear writing."

Teaching writing is demanding. It can't be done through lecturing--it is most easily done through the method that Mortimer Adler calls coaching much like one coaches a high school athlete. The approach of writing and rewriting, of perfecting a paragraph much as one would perfect a tennis stroke is one that we use at Hampshire but it is rarely part of the traditional secondary or college curriculum. Most of us know that the precision and clarity that comes with good writing is rarely achieved in a first draft. Even the best writers revise their own works often on the basis of comments of others. In short, students need time to work and rework drafts to understand the process of crafting a paper. And writing is not all there is to language. Language is also listening and speaking as well as learning to see.

The complete discussion of language in the Boyer report is significant and I urge you all to read that as well as the other aspects of the curriculum that are considered in great detail in the report. I will mention only one other that is of deep interest to me personally as well as to Ernie Boyer: the study of the relationship between the student, his own country, and the world in which we all live. Forty percent of all the farmland in the United States produces goods for export; the jobs of one in six production workers are directly dependent upon international trade. The citizen who wants to influence his representatives in government about aspects of policy that will affect his life must have a sense of his own place within the nation and within the

world. To educate students in all countries about the diversity of cultures and the sufficiency of each is a part of the mission of the curriculum. To grasp the relativity of cultures--to appreciate the Western way of doing things without placing it at the center of the universe--is an intellectual achievement of utmost importance to the student. As the student recognizes that attitudes and habits are the product of culture and environment, two important and complementary conclusions can be drawn: that our own ways of thinking and acting do not compromise a universal standard and that a few values and tendencies are not culture bound but emerge instead as deeply human.

Mastery of language, understanding of self and one's place in society through the core curriculum, the development of special aptitudes through electives, and the development of a sense of civic obligation are the curricular goals that Boyer proposes. Rather than debate variations on these goals, the Carnegie group would argue that the school must set its own clear goals and get on with refining the curriculum to accomplish its goals.

Teachers are the heart of the matter and our expectations of them affect their expectations of students.

The Carnegie report advocates raising teachers' salaries and merit pay but there is a danger that the discussion of teaching

will get stuck on these issues. Merit pay is being discussed in the Presidential campaign. In my view, it is the wrong subject, for it alone will not have the significant impact on the teaching profession that is called for. The Carnegie Report devotes several pages to recommendations to teachers, teaching and teacher training but if one single set of those recommendations could be implemented today it would be those related to working conditions.

The most important difference for teachers is their own work environment and the stature that they are given within the community. This is not the a problem but it is one that we can address immediately, for each of us could find ways to recognize and value teachers and the work that they do.

Good teachers need time to prepare. They need time to keep up with their field. They need time to work individually with small groups of students and they need to be able to shape the subject that they teach and the way in which they teach it so that they are as interested as their students. And they need a place of respect within their own community.

Finally, as we leave this conference, we need to think ahead. While we take advantage of the current attention to secondary education we must also develop ways to sustain that interest. Our society has a sad record of moving quickly from one issue to another--of following fashion and fad. With the support of the Atlantic Richfield Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching will be making a series of grants to high schools to help them implement some changes. These grants, combined with the video tape shown on public television last week,

are some ways of sustaining interest in these quesitons over time. The challenge for all of us here is not only to get on with the agenda we have established for ourselves in the past year but to find ways to sustain national attention for our schools over time.